# IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

AVERY PATRICK

20 Ayers Court

East Brunswick, NJ 08816

CIVIL ACTION

Plaintiff,

v.

No.:

PHILADELPHIA GAS WORKS

d/b/a PGW

800 West Montgomery Ave.

Philadelphia, PA 19122

and

MPOWER SOFTWARE SERVICES, LLC:

115 Pheasant Run, Ste. 110

Newtown, PA 18940

Defendants

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

### **CIVIL ACTION COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff, by and through his undersigned counsel, hereby avers as follows:

#### I. INTRODUCTION

1. This action has been initiated by Avery Patrick (hereinafter referred to as "Plaintiff," unless indicated otherwise) against Philadelphia Gas Works and mPower Software Services, LLC (hereinafter collectively referred to as "Defendants," unless indicated otherwise) for violations of 42 U.S.C. § 1981, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Title VII - 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d et. seq.), and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act ("PHRA"). As a direct consequence of Defendants' unlawful actions, Plaintiff seeks damages as set forth herein.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Plaintiff's claim under the PHRA is referenced herein for notice purposes. He is required to wait 1 full year before initiating a lawsuit from date of dual-filing with the EEOC. Plaintiff must however file his lawsuit in advance of same because of the date of issuance of his federal right-to-sue letter under Title VII. Plaintiff's PHRA claims however will mirror identically his federal claims under Title VII.

#### II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 2. This Court, in accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1331, has jurisdiction over Plaintiff's claims because this civil action arises under laws of the United States.
- 3. This Court may properly maintain personal jurisdiction over Defendants because Defendants' contacts with this state and this judicial district are sufficient for the exercise of jurisdiction over Defendants to comply with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice, satisfying the standard set forth by the United States Supreme Court in International Shoe Co. v. Washington, 326 U.S. 310 (1945) and its progeny. This Court has supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiff's future state-law claim(s) because such claim(s) arise out of the same common nucleus of operative facts as his federal claims asserted herein.
- 4. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(1) and (b)(2), venue is properly laid in this district because all of the acts and/or omissions giving rise to the claims set forth herein occurred in this judicial district, and in addition, Defendants are deemed to reside where they are subject to personal jurisdiction, rendering Defendants residents of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.
- 5. Plaintiff is proceeding herein under the Title VII and has properly exhausted his administrative remedies (with respect to his Title VII claims) by timely filing a Charge of Discrimination with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC") and by filing the instant lawsuit within ninety (90) days of receiving a notice of dismissal and/or right to sue letter from the EEOC.

#### III. PARTIES

- 6. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
  - 7. Plaintiff is an adult individual, with an address as set forth in the caption.

- 8. Defendant Philadelphia Gas Works (*hereinafter* referred to as "Defendant PGW") is a large municipally owned natural gas utility.
- 9. Defendant mPower Software Services, LLC (hereinafter referred to as "Defendant mPower") is a staffing agency located at the above-captioned address.
- 10. Plaintiff was placed by Defendant mPower to work within Defendant PGW, and although Plaintiff was hired and paid through Defendant mPower, Plaintiff was treated in all functional respects like an employee while working within Defendant PGW. Defendants' management had the ability to manage Plaintiff, give directive to Plaintiff, and make decisions regarding Plaintiff's employment. Plaintiff was permitted to address his work concerns with Defendants' management and was obligated to follow the rules and policies of Defendants. Thus, for the foregoing reasons, Defendants may be treated as a single and/or joint employer for purposes of the instant action.
- 11. At all times relevant herein, Defendants acted by and through their agents, servants and employees, each of whom acted at all times relevant herein in the course and scope of their employment with and for Defendants.

#### IV. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

- 12. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
  - 13. Plaintiff is a black (Jamaican-born) male.
- 14. Plaintiff was physically placed by Defendant mPower to work at PGW for a little more than 1.5 years (initially being hired in or about December of 2015).
- 15. Plaintiff was interviewed and hired by mPower for the position of Desktop Support Analyst and continued to hold said position throughout his tenure with Defendants.

- 16. During his employment with Defendants, Plaintiff was a hard-working employee who performed his job well and lacked any progressive discipline.
- 17. At all times relevant herein, Plaintiff was primarily supervised by Defendant PGW's management, including but not limited to Charles Morrison.
- 18. While employed with Defendants, Plaintiff believes he was subjected to discriminatory treatment based on his race and/or national origin primarily by Defendant PGW's staff and management, including but not limited to Mr. Morrison (as it pertains to national origin discrimination), Armando Martino (Caucasian Senior Network Analyst), and Craig Yorty (Supervisor LAN (local area networks)/WAN (wide area network) Engineering).
- 19. By way of example, unlike Plaintiff's non-black and/or non-Jamaican employees, he was treated in a rude and demeaning manner, called an idiot, cursed at, and subjected to discriminatory comments such as using the terms "pimp" and "prostitutes." <sup>2</sup>
- 20. In or about April of 2017, Plaintiff complained to Defendants' management, including but not limited to Mr. Morrison and Michael Soroka (Senior Account Manager at Defendant mPower) about the discriminatory behavior that he believed he was being subjected to.
- 21. Plaintiff also expressed his concerns of the aforesaid discriminatory behavior to Defendant PGW's Human Resources Department, including Gary Gioioso (Defendant PGW Director of Organizational Development) and Matthew Rohrer (Defendant PGW Senior Business Partner).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See e.g. Perkins v. Nat'l Express Corp., 105 F.Supp.3d 970, 977-78 (N.D. Cal. 2015) ("pimpmobile" used in reference to a luxury car driven by African—American male "carries a discriminatory meaning"). Pulliam v. Wichita State Univ., No. 16-2161-JTM, 2016 WL 6125028, at \*3 (D. Kan. Oct. 20, 2016) ("don't pimp us out" carried a racial connotation which gave credence to the employee's good faith basis, even if mistaken, for objecting to the comment.); Brown v. Ryder Sys. Inc., No. 11-62746-CIV, 2013 WL 221496, at \*6 (S.D. Fla. Jan. 18, 2013) ("pimps and hos" was considered to be an "inflammatory, discriminatory and offensive" remark).

- 22. During his aforesaid complaints of discrimination to Defendants' management and Defendant PGW's HR department, Plaintiff (1) verbally informed Defendants' management and Defendant PGW's HR department about the aforesaid discriminatory treatment based on his race and national origin; (2) referenced the offense that he took to such treatment/actions; and (3) indicated that he believe the use of the terms "pimp" and "prostitutes" were racist in nature (in context with the racial discriminatory atmosphere that he believed he was being subjected to discussed *supra*).
- 23. During his aforesaid meeting with Defendant PGW's HR department, Plaintiff was ignored any time he brought up his perceptions of race and/or national origin discrimination and was instead directed by Gioioso and Rohrer to only discuss the actual comments that were made and/or the actions taken by Martino, Yorty and, Morrison (rather than how Plaintiff perceived said comments and/or actions to be discriminatory in nature).
- 24. At the end of his meeting with Gioiso and Rohrer, Plaintiff was asked to sign a statement regarding the actions and comments that he reported during his aforesaid meeting with Defendant PGW's HR department (as Gioioso and Roher were disinterested in his perceptions or beliefs about national origin and race discrimination).
- 25. Plaintiff therefore signed the aforesaid statement regarding the comments and actions that he reported during his meeting with Defendant PGW's HR department to the best of his recollection.
- 26. On or about May 22, 2017, Plaintiff was issued a letter from Rohrer, which confirmed that both Yorty and Martino admitted to using the term "pimp" on at least one occasion.

- 27. After having worked without any progressive discipline and having performed his job very well, Plaintiff was removed abruptly and terminated from his assignment with Defendant PGW on or about Friday, June 23, 2017.
- 28. Plaintiff was informed that he was being terminated due to concerns with his technical abilities despite a total lack of warning, concerns being expressed, and prior praise.
- 29. Upon information and belief, Plaintiff was also replaced by someone less qualified.
- 30. Following his termination from Defendant PGW and after filing his EEOC charge against Defendants, Soroka called Plaintiff on or about November 16, 2017 and informed him that his current job through Defendant mPower could be in jeopardy and things at his new job could "get rough" if Defendant mPower is forced to hire an attorney to defend themselves in the EEOC case.
- 31. Because of this threat and in fear of losing a new job, Plaintiff felt that he was forced to write an e-mail to Defendant mPower indicating that it was solely Defendant PGW that discriminated and/or retaliated against him rather than Defendant mPower.
- 32. Plaintiff therefore believes and avers that his termination was completely pretextual and that he was really terminated because of his complaints about race/national origin discrimination.

# Count I Violation of 42 U.S.C. Section 1981 (Retaliation) - Against Both Defendants -

33. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.

- 34. Upon information and belief, Plaintiff was terminated by Defendants from his assignment with Defendant PGW because he complained of racial discrimination to Defendants' management.
  - 35. These actions as aforesaid constitute violations of 42 U.S.C. Section 1981.

# Count II <u>Violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Title VII")</u> (Retaliation) - Against Both Defendants -

- 36. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
- 37. Upon information and belief, Plaintiff was terminated by Defendants from his assignment with Defendant PGW because he complained of racial/national origin discrimination to Defendants' management.
  - 38. These actions as aforesaid constitute violations of Title VII.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that this Court enter an Order providing that:

- A. Defendants are to be prohibited from continuing to maintain their illegal policy, practice or custom of retaliating against employees and are to be ordered to promulgate an effective policy against such unlawful acts and to adhere thereto;
- B. Defendants are to compensate Plaintiff, reimburse Plaintiff and make Plaintiff whole for any and all pay and benefits Plaintiff would have received had it not been for Defendants' illegal actions, including but not limited to past lost earnings, future lost earnings, salary, pay increases, bonuses, medical and other benefits, training, promotions, pension, and seniority. Plaintiff should be accorded those benefits illegally withheld from the date he first suffered retaliation/discrimination at the hands of Defendants until the date of verdict;

C. Plaintiff is to be awarded liquidated or punitive damages, as permitted by

applicable law(s) alleged asserted herein, in an amount believed by the Court or trier of fact to be

appropriate to punish Defendants for their willful, deliberate, malicious and outrageous conduct

and to deter Defendants or other employers from engaging in such misconduct in the future;

Plaintiff is to be accorded any and all other equitable and legal relief as the Court D.

deems just, proper and appropriate including for emotional distress;

Ε. Plaintiff is to be awarded the costs and expenses of this action and reasonable

legal fees as provided by applicable federal and state law;

F. Any verdict in favor of Plaintiff is to be molded by the Court to maximize the

financial recovery available to Plaintiff in light of the caps on certain damages set forth in

applicable federal law; and

G. Plaintiff's claims are to receive a trial by jury to the extent allowed by applicable

law. Plaintiff has also endorsed this demand on the caption of this Complaint in accordance with

Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b).

Respectfully submitted,

KARPF, KARPF, & CERUTTI, P.C.

By:

Ari R. Karpf, Esq.

3331 Street Road

Two Greenwood Square, Suite 128

Bensalem, PA 19020

Date: June 21, 2018

### **VERIFICATION**

The undersigned states that the facts in the foregoing Complaint are true and correct to the best of her knowledge, information and belief. The undersigned understands that any intentionally false statements herein are subject to criminal penalties relating to sworn and unsworn statements.

Date: 14 June 2018

# IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

#### CASE MANAGEMENT TRACK DESIGNATION FORM

Avery Patrick

CIVIL ACTION

. v.		:	•	
Philadelphia Gas Works	d/b/a PGW, et al.	;	NO.	
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SELECT ONE OF THE FO	OLLOWING CA	SE MAN	AGEMENT TRACKS:	
a) Habeas Corpus Cascs l	prought under 28	U.S.C. § 2	241 through § 2255.	()
b) Social Security - Cases r and Human Services den	requesting review lying plaintiff Soc	of a decis	ion of the Secretary of Health ty Benefits.	· ( )
c) Arbitration - Cases requi	ired to be designa	ted for arb	itration under Local Civil Rule 53.2	( )
d) Asbestos – Cases involvi exposure to asbestos.	ing claims for per	sonal inju	ry or property damage from	()
e) Special Management – C commonly referred to as the court. (See reverse s management cases.)	complex and that	t need spe	Sial of intense management by	( )
f) Standard Management -	Cases that do not	t fall into s	my one of the other tracks.	(X)
6/21/2018 Date	Attorney-at	>law	Plaintiff Attorney for	Marie de la companya
(215) 639-0801	(215) 639-49	70	akarpf@karpf-law.com	
<u>Celephone</u>	FAX Numi	ber	E-Mail Address	

(Clv. 660) 10/02

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## UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

#### DESIGNATION FORM

(to be used by counsel or pro se plaintiff to indicate the category of the case for the purpose of assignment to the appropriate calendar)

Address of Plaintiff: 20 Ayers Court, East Brunswick, NJ 08816						
Address of Defendant: 800 West Montgomery Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19122; 115 Pheasant Run, Suite 110, Newtown, PA 18940						
Place of Accident, Incident or Transaction: Defendants place of business						
RELATED CASE, IF ANY:						
Case Number: Judge: Date Terminated:						
Civil cases are deemed related when Yes is answered to any of the following questions:						
1. Is this case related to property included in an earlier numbered suit pending or within one year  Yes  No X  previously terminated action in this court?						
2. Does this case involve the same issue of fact or grow out of the same transaction as a prior suit yes No X pending or within one year previously terminated action in this court?						
3. Does this case involve the validity or infringement of a patent already in suit or any earlier numbered case pending or within one year previously terminated action of this court?						
4. Is this case a second or successive habeas corpus, social security appeal, or pro se civil rights  Yes  No X						
I certify that, to my knowledge, the within case is / is not related to any case now pending or within one year previously terminated action in this court except as noted above.						
DATE: 6/21/2018 ARK2484 / 91538  Attorney-at-Law / Pro Se Plaintiff Attorney l.D. # (if applicable)						
Adomey-at-Eath / 110 de 1 talang)						
CIVIL: (Place a √ in one category only)						
A. Federal Question Cases:  B. Diversity Jurisdiction Cases:						
1. Indemnity Contract, Marine Contract, and All Other Contracts  2. FELA  1. Insurance Contract and Other Contracts  Airplane Personal Injury						
3. Jones Act-Personal Injury 3. Assault, Defamation						
☐ 4. Antitrust ☐ 4. Marine Personal Injury ☐ 5. Patent ☐ 5. Motor Vehicle Personal Injury						
4. Antitrust   4. Marine Personal Injury   5. Patent   5. Motor Vehicle Personal Injury   6. Labor-Management Relations   6. Other Personal Injury (Please specify):   7. Civil Rights   7. Products Liability   8. Habeas Corpus   8. Products Liability   Asbestos   8. Products Liability   Asbestos   7. Products Liability   8. Product						
8. Habeas Corpus 8. Products Liability – Asbestos						
9. Securities Act(s) Cases 10. Social Security Review Cases (Please specify):						
11. All other Federal Question Cases						
(Please specify):						
ADDITO ATION CERTIFICATION						
ARBITRATION CERTIFICATION  (The effect of this certification is to remove the case from eligibility for arbitration.)						
I, Ari R. Karpf , counsel of record or pro se plaintiff, do hereby certify:						
Pursuant to Local Civil Rule 53.2, § 3(c) (2), that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the damages recoverable in this civil action case exceed the sum of \$150,000.00 exclusive of interest and costs:						
Relief other than monetary damages is sought.						
DATE: 6/21/2018 ARK2484 / 91538 .						
NOTE: A trial de novo will be a trial by jury only if there has been compliance with F.R.C.P. 38.						

JS 44 (Rev. 06/17)

# **CIVIL COVER SHEET**

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the

purpose of initiating the civil do	ocket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE C	FTHIS FORM.)			
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS		DEFENDANTS			
PATRICK, AVERY		PHILADELPHIA GAS WORKS D/B/A PGW, ET AL.			
(b) County of Residence of (E.	f First Listed Plaintiff Middlesex  XCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)	County of Residence of First Listed Defendant  (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)  NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.			
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, )	Address, and Telephone Number)	Attorneys (If Known)			
Karpf, Karpf & Cerutti, I Suite 128, Bensalem, PA	P.C.; 3331 Street Road, Two Greenwood 19020; (215) 639-0801; akarpf@karpf	Square, law.com			
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)	III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintif (For Diversity Cases Only) and One Box for Defendant)			
1 U.S. Government Plaintiff	X 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)	PTF DEF  Citizen of This State 1 l Incorporated or Principal Place 4 4 of Business In This State			
2 U.S. Government Defendant	4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)	Citizen of Another State 2 2 Incorporated and Principal Place 5 5 of Business In Another State			
		Citizen or Subject of a 3 3 Foreign Nation 6 6 Foreign Country			
IV. NATURE OF SUIT		Click here for: Nature of Suit Code Descriptions.  EORBEITURE/PENALTY BANKRUPTCY OTHER STATUTES 5			
CONTRACT	PERSONAL INJURY  310 Airplane 315 Airplane Product Liability 320 Assault, Libel & Slander 330 Federal Employers' Liability 340 Marine 345 Marine Product Liability 350 Motor Vehicle Product Liability 360 Other Personal Injury Medical Malpractice PETYLERIGHTS  441 Voting Accommodations 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other  448 Education  PERSONAL INJUF 367 Health Care/ Pharmaceutical Personal Injury Product Liability 368 Asbestos Persona Injury Product Liability PERSONAL PROPE 370 Other Personal Injury Product Liability 380 Other Personal Property Damage 385 Property Damage Product Liability 441 Voting 442 Employment 443 Housing/ Accommodations 4445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other  448 Education  550 Civil Rights 555 Prison Conditions 560 Civil Detainee Conditions of	1			
V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" No Original Proceeding St.	emoved from 0 3 Remanded from Appellate Court	I 4 Reinstated or ' 5 Transferred from I 6 Multidistrict I 8 Multidistrict Reopened Another District Litigation - Litigation - Litigation - Direct File			
VI. CAUSE OF ACTION	ON 42USC1981; Title VII (42USC200) Brief description of cause:				
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	Violations of 42USC1981, Title VI  CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTIO UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P.	OTTOO VEG and if demanded in complaint			
VIII. RELATED CAS	E(S) (See instructions):  IUDGE	DOCKET NUMBER			
DATE SIGNATURE OF ATTORNET OF RECORD					
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY					
RECEIPT# A	MOUNT APPLYING IFE	JUDGE MAG. JUDGE			

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